



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,  
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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improved in the last fifty years. The standard of teaching is higher, and our educational ideals are nobler and wiser, but the very fact that these things are amended seems to furnish an excuse to the parents for their own sluggishness. Teachers are doing so much, and are doing it so well, that parents may safely leave them, they appear to think, to do all. The teacher is made the guardian of a girl's health and morals and manners, and if either of these go wrong, the parents soothe their drowsy consciences with an outcry against "the schools" or "the system." They do not appear to understand that, till they themselves rouse up and do *their* part more thoroughly, no one can say we have given a *fair* trial to our present-day system of female education.

[Discussion is invited.—ED.]

"Scale How" Tuesdays.\*

HENRY PURCELL.

BY BEATRICE M. GOODE.

HENRY PURCELL was born at a time when music in England was at its lowest ebb. It had reached a high point of brilliancy at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but during the time of the Puritan ascendancy it became very degenerate. In 1643 the cathedral service was suppressed, church music books destroyed, organs taken down, choir men and boys turned adrift, and no music allowed to be sung save plain metrical psalms, and these were performed without harmony by the whole congregation as best they could, unaccompanied by any instrument, and with the words of every line read out by the minister before they were sung. Theatres and places of musical entertainment were closed and no public performance of any sort of music was permitted. By means of all these measures the appreciation of good music was practically destroyed.

All this took place before Cromwell became Protector, so he must not be held accountable for this violent raid upon the art. He was himself fond of music and had a professional musician among the members of his household. The art of music was however on the threshold of a complete revolution, and the music of Purcell stands as it were nicely balanced between the past and the future.

No sooner was the monarchy restored, and with it among other good things the choral services of the Church of England, than composers and executants sprang up on all sides, who set to work to restore to England that musical character which had once been her boast.

Henry Purcell is the greatest and most original genius which the English school has ever produced. He was born

[\* Our readers may remember our note about "Scale How Tuesdays," in the *Parents' Review* for September, 1903. It is the custom at the House of Education for one or another student to read an appreciation of some favourite author or composer, illustrated by extracts or compositions read or performed by some of those present. The information is of course gathered from various sources. We venture to think that this should be a pleasant custom in families; so a series will be published month by month, in order to familiarise our readers with the plan. Even the younger members will enjoy taking part in the readings.—ED.]



in 1658 at a house in St. Ann's Lane, Old Pye Street, Westminster. His father, Henry Purcell, dying when he was only six years old, he was placed under the guardianship of his uncle Thomas Purcell, one of the King's musicians. At this early age, through the influence of his uncle, he became one of the choristers of the Chapel Royal, and there received his first musical instruction from Pelham Humphrey, who appears to have studied in France and Italy, and borrowed new ideas from the opera school of Lulli. Pepys tells us in his diary that Master Humphreys returned from Paris an absolute monsieur, disparaging everything and everybody's skill but his own. He seems to have effected great changes in the musical world and greatly to have pleased King Charles, for he describes himself as being "mighty thick with his Majesty." Pelham Humphrey died at the age of 27, but his direct influence may be traced in Henry Purcell. It is probable that Purcell began to compose at a very early age, but his first undoubted work is the music to Shadwell's "Libertine," which he produced at the age of 18.

(*"Nymphs and Shepherds" sung here*).

This music was followed by other compositions for dramatic works. He was now copyist at Westminster Abbey, and wrote at the same time anthems for performance at the Abbey. Many of his anthems are still used and are of great beauty; others are rendered impracticable for present use, as they were written especially to show off the voice of Gostling, a wonderful bass of extraordinary compass. Gostling, Minor Canon of Canterbury, and afterwards gentleman extraordinary of the Chapel Royal, was one of Purcell's most particular friends. The famous anthem, written for him, "They that go down to the sea in ships," has a compass for the bass voice of two octaves.

Purcell as it were sprang into fame by the production of his opera, "Dido and Aeneas," composed for performance by the young gentlewomen of Mr. Josias Priest's school. It is entirely without spoken dialogue, and was more than a century in advance of the musical taste of the age. "The Death Song of Dido" is full of pathos.

(*"The Death Song of Dido" sung here*).

He was now kept fully occupied in composing for different

theatrical performances, and about this time he also produced the first of his numerous odes, "an Ode or Welcome song for his Royal Highness the Duke of York on his return from Scotland." Not so many years afterwards Purcell's composition, "Lillibullero," was one of the chief factors in driving "that deluded Prince out of three kingdoms."

(*"Lillibullero" sung here*).

In 1680, Purcell was appointed organist of Westminster Abbey, Dr. Blow resigning in his favour, and for six years he dropped all connection with the stage. Two years later he was appointed organist of the Chapel Royal, though he still retained his post at the Abbey.

The following year he came forward in a new capacity, as a composer of instrumental chamber music, by the publication of twelve sonatas of three parts, two violins and a basse, to the organ or harpsichord. Each comprises an adagio, a fugue, a slow movement and an air.

Purcell himself declares his object to be "to give a just imitation of the most fam'd Italian masters, principally to bring the seriousness and gravity of that sort of music into vogue and reputation among our countrymen, whose humour 'tis time now should begin to loathe the levity and balladry of our neighbours." He confesses the attempt to be bold and daring and is not ashamed to own his unskilfulness in the Italian language, but that he says is the unhappiness of his education which cannot justly be counted his fault. He thinks, however, that he is not mistaken in the power of the Italian notes or elegance of their compositions. It seems likely that it was through the king that he became acquainted with Italian composers. His special model appears to have been Giovanni Battista Vitali, whose sonatas are strikingly similar. That Purcell was an admirer of Vitali is attested by the fact that he named his eldest son Baptista after him.

The famous "Golden Sonata," so called on account of its excellence, was of a later date, and formed one of a collection of ten which were published in 1697 by his widow.

(*"The Golden Sonata," string quartette, two violins, 'cello and piano, played here*).

In 1686 he returned to dramatic composition, and produced the music for Dryden's revived tragedy, "Tyrannic Love."



He was also frequently occupied in writing odes to celebrate different state events. One of these, written to celebrate the King's birthday, "Sound the Trumpet," continued so long in favour that succeeding composers of odes for royal birthdays were accustomed to introduce it into their own compositions until the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1688 he composed songs for Tom Durfey's "A Fool's Preferment." With one exception they belong to the character of a young man mad for love, and they express in the most admirable manner his varied emotions. They were sung by William Mountford.

(*"I'll sail upon the Dogstar" sung here*).

A few years afterwards Purcell became involved in a dispute with the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. He had received money from persons for admission into the organ loft to view the Coronation of William and Mary, considering the organ loft as his in right of office. An order was issued that unless he paid over the money his place should be declared null and void. It is presumed some agreement was come to, as he retained the appointment till his death. (It is interesting to note that the organist exercised similar privileges at the coronation of Queen Victoria).

In the same year he composed music for "The Tempest." The songs, "Come unto these yellow sands," and "Full Fathom Five," have retained uninterrupted possession of the stage from that time.

(*"Full Fathom Five" sung here*).

In the same year he produced the music for Fletcher's play, "The History of Dioclesian." Here again the great advance made by the composer is visible.

(*"What shall I do?" sung here*).

Purcell in the dedication of this play to the Duke of Somerset gives his modest estimate of the state of English musical art in his day. "Music and poetry," he says, "have ever been acknowledged sisters, who walking hand in hand support each other. As poetry is the harmony of words so music is that of notes, and as poetry is a rise above prose and oratory, so is music the exaltation of poetry. Both of them may excel apart, but surely they are most excellent when they are joined, because nothing is then wanting to either of their

proportions, for thus they appear like wit and beauty in the same person. Poetry and painting have arrived to perfection in our own country, music is yet but in its nonage, a forward child who gives hope of what it may be hereafter in England when the masters of it shall find encouragement. 'Tis now learning Italian, which is its best master, and studying a little of the French air to give it somewhat more of gaiety and fashion. Thus being further from the sun we are of later growth than our neighbour countries and must be content to shake off our barbarity by degrees. The present age seems already disposed to be refined and to distinguish between wild fancy and a just humourous composition."

(*Preludio, Song Tune, Country Dance, Aire, four instruments*).

In the next year Purcell excelled himself and produced his dramatic *chef d'œuvre*, "King Arthur." From Dryden's dedication it appears that Purcell was consulted by the poet as to where the music might be most effectively introduced, and that Dryden acted upon his suggestions.

(*Duet sung here*).

The favourite song from this work is—"Fairest isle all isles excelling" (*sung here*).

It seems strange that this masterpiece, "King Arthur," should remain unpublished till 1843, a century and a half after its production, when it was printed by the Musical Antiquarian Society. Four songs, however, had been lost in the interval.

(*Violin solo here*).

In 1692, Purcell composed the music for Howard and Dryden's "Indian Queen," with the beautiful rondo, "I attempt from Love's sickness to fly" (*sung here*).

The last composition of Purcell, a cantata, "From Rosy Bowers," bears a striking proof of the fact that however much enfeebled by disease his frame may have been, his mental powers remained vigorous and unimpaired to the last.

He died of consumption on Nov. 21st, 1695, and was buried on the night of the following Tuesday at Westminster Abbey, under the organ. A tablet above bears the inscription:—"Here lyes Henry Purcell, Esq., who left this life and is gone to that blessed place where only his harmony can be exceeded."